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TAGS: PREL ETRD JA CH

SUBJECT: JAPANESE AMBASSADOR ON WEN VISIT, YASUKUNI SHRINE
AND CIVILIAN CONTROL OF CHINESE MILITARY

REF: BEIJING 2680

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Rndt, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Chinese and Japanese leaders made calculated decisions that allowed Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's April 11-13 visit to Japan to succeed, Japanese Ambassador to China Miyamoto told the Ambassador in a May 9 meeting. Japanese PM Abe judged that a successful Wen visit would help his domestic political standing and stifle Japanese criticism of the trip.

Wen accidentally omitted reference to Japan's peaceful post-war development in his speech to the Diet, acceded to a Japanese request to leave Taiwan out of a joint statement during the visit and instructed Chinese ministers to take concrete steps to improve ties on economic issues, the environment and the East China Sea resources dispute.

Beijing responded in a measured way after Abe donated a plant to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine this week and Miyamoto said the incident will not interfere with Abe's plans to visit Beijing this fall or a likely Hu Jintao visit to Tokyo next year. Miyamoto assesses civilian control of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has constraints, and Japan sees the anti-satellite test as symbolic of a real military threat from China. Nonetheless, Miyamoto believes Tokyo and Washington should avoid publicly playing up proposals like the "Quad" because they strengthen the hand of the PLA. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met with Japanese Ambassador to Beijing Yuji Miyamoto May 9 to discuss Chinese Premier Wen's recent visit to Japan and take stock of the Sino-Japanese relationship in the wake of Abe's recent visit to Washington.

Wen's visit was an unqualified success, Miyamoto said, a result of a Chinese decision to improve ties with Japan "at any cost" and PM Abe's political calculation that a successful visit would bolster Abe's popularity in Japan. Wen personally resolved key sticking points during the run-up to the visit, Miyamoto said, for example appointing Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan to head the Sino-Japanese High-Level Economic Dialogue and withdrawing a Chinese demand that Japan express in writing opposition to Taiwan independence. Abe's calculations proved correct as he enjoyed a five point jump in popularity polls after Wen's visit, he said.

¶3. (C) Wen's instructions to ministers accompanying him on the visit produced concrete improvements in Sino-Japanese relations and helped to overcome objections from a suspicious

bureaucracy, Miyamoto said. For example, Tokyo felt Chinese foreign ministry officials responsible for Asia were taking too cautious an approach to the controversy over offshore resources in the disputed East China Sea. Thanks to Wen's instruction to resolve the issue before PM Abe's visit to Beijing this fall, talks will resume later this month on the resource controversy, Miyamoto said. Miyamoto credited the improvement in Sino-Japanese ties to work behind the scenes done by Chinese Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo and Japanese VFM Yachi, who overcame resistance from officials more directly responsible for the bilateral relationship. Both Dai and Yachi enjoy strong backing of their political leadership, he said, contrasting them with PRC State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, whom he said had made many mistakes in his approach to Japan.

¶4. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's question, Miyamoto stressed that Premier Wen's failure to read a key paragraph of his speech to the Diet praising Japan's post-WWII peaceful development (reftel) was an accident. Wen looked up after receiving unexpected applause and inadvertently skipped the paragraph when he continued his speech, Miyamoto reported. The People's Daily printed the speech in full the next day, including the omitted paragraph, he noted.

Beijing Response to Abe's Yasukuni Gift "Moderate"

¶5. (C) PM Abe's gift of a bonsai tree to Yasukuni Shrine this week will not interfere with Abe's plans to visit Beijing this fall, Miyamoto said. China's reaction to the donation has been relatively moderate, and Chinese officials have not yet called in Miyamoto to lodge a formal protest. Officials in Tokyo privately explained the donation as "an obligation

of the wealthy" to support local temples, Miyamoto claimed. Abe had concluded that he would likely be photographed if he visited the Shrine in person, thereby destroying his stated policy of ambiguity about whether he would visit Yasukuni as PM.

Abe Visit to Beijing, Hu Trip to Japan Promised

¶6. (C) Abe plans to visit Beijing this fall, likely in October. Miyamoto said he has advised that the visit take place after China's Communist Party Congress, which will be held on a date to be determined between September and November. An October Abe visit to Beijing would have the added leverage of discouraging Abe from visiting the controversial Shrine during the most popular annual pilgrimage season (October 17-21), he added. China will "consider positively" Abe's invitation to have Hu Jintao visit Tokyo next year. Japan believes Hu will visit in the spring, making the visit separate from Hu's scheduled attendance at the G-8 Summit to be hosted in Tokyo.

Constraints on Civilian Control of Chinese Military?

¶7. (C) Turning to the May 1 Two-Plus-Two security consultations in Washington, Miyamoto said Japan has serious concerns about the constraints on Chinese civilian control over the PLA. All PLA decisions are considered "state secrets," Miyamoto said, meaning that the military's thinking

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goes relatively unknown and unchallenged by others in Chinese Government. Hu Jintao has theoretical control over the PLA, but does not exercise it often, Miyamoto averred. Relying heavily on the botched public explanation of China's anti-satellite test to support his views, Miyamoto said Tokyo sees the test as symbolic of the PLA's "real threat" to Japan. Moreover, China's military spending is likely to increase because the PLA has convinced Hu that it needs to be prepared to win back Taiwan "under any scenario," Miyamoto claimed. This Taiwan card gives the PLA a source of publicly supported independent power, he suggested. "Today China is

discussing two new aircraft carriers, tomorrow they will discuss other concerns about the U.S.-Japan security alliance," he said. The Ambassador emphasized that we should continue to demand greater transparency from China's military.

Public Versus Private Diplomacy with Beijing

¶8. (C) Miyamoto said public discussion of regional groupings that threaten China, such as the Australia-India-Japan-United States "Quad," are unhelpful because they only fuel the fear-mongering of China's military and strengthen the hand of the PLA. "We should be supporting China's civilians and moderate political leaders, like Hu and Wen, not strengthening the military," he added. Japan will increase military-to-military ties with China, if only to explain to uniformed personnel why it sees China's increased spending as a threat.

¶9. (C) Miyamoto noted that PM Abe listens, in particular, to VFM Yachi on China-related issues and describes himself as a strong supporter of PM Abe, but acknowledged that Abe has made some mistakes in his early dealings with Beijing. For one, Abe's support for "values-based" diplomacy would be more effective if done in private, rather than in public, Miyamoto suggested. In addition, Miyamoto said MOFA believes in retrospect that, during Abe's October 2006 visit to Beijing, Abe should have directly told Chinese leaders that he opposed lifting of the European arms embargo. The Chinese had previously heard about Abe's opposition from European leaders, and he would have earned greater respect from Beijing had he stated his differences on this issue directly, rather than trying to hide the issue, MOFA believes.

Environment a Major Concern; Social Stability Less

¶10. (C) Tokyo sees social tensions in China rising but does not believe they pose a major, immediate threat to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Miyamoto assessed. Environmental problems, increasing crime and wealth disparities in China are serious issues, but Miyamoto said he

is advising Tokyo that it should not underestimate the CCP's ability to find solutions. During Wen's visit to Tokyo, Japan offered several types of assistance to Chinese sustainable development, he said, including an agreement to work with China on the Yellow River, Yangtze River and Bohai Gulf.

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